THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES) : (a) All the purchases in the Canteen Stores Department are made as per laid down norms and policies. However, as and when any case of corrupt practice comes to notice, necessary action is initiated as per rules.

(b) The norms for the purchase of the alcoholic beverages in canteen stores department are consistent with overall purchase policies.

(c) Canteen Stores Department provides wide choice of products keeping in view the requirement of the consumer.

Re-establishment of Ahir Regiment

1063. SHRI D.P. YADAV: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are considering to re-establish Ahir Regiment which had been dissolved under the conspiracy for revolting against British Regime; and

(b) if so, by when, if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES) : (a) and (b) No, Sir. There is no proposal to raise a separate Ahir Regiment in the Indian Army. The policy of the Government is not to raise any new regiment on the basis of a particular class, creed, community, religion or region, but to have an Army in which all Indians have representation.

India-Australia Defence cooperation

1064. DR. VIJAY MALLYA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that in the first week of June, an Australian Naval Ship HMAs Adelaide had docked in Chennai Port for joint naval exercise with the Indian Navy;

(b) if so, whether Government propose to strengthen the relationship between Australia and India for Defence cooperation; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) Defence Cooperation between India and Australia is being strengthened through an institutionalised mechanism of Indo-Australia strategic dialogue. The first round of this dialogue was held in August, 2001 and the 2nd round in March, 2003. Defence cooperation between India and Australia is also being progressed through joint naval exercises and exchange of officers in defence training establishments of both countries.

Bharat Electronics Ltd.

1065. MISS MABEL REBELLO: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Bharat Electronics Ltd., is posed to become Rs. 5,000 crore PSU;

(b) if so, what are its past achievements and future plans; and

(c) its achievements in the export field during the year 2002-2003 and expected future growth in the current fiscal?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES) : (a) Yes, Sir. Bharat Electronics Ltd. has worked out an internal "Vision Plan" to become a Rs. 5,000 crore company by the year 2007.

(b) BEL meets a variety of requirements of the Defence Services in the areas of Radars, Sonars, Communication Equipment and Systems, SATCOM, Tank Electronics, Electronic Warfare Equipment etc., meeting stringent Defence specifications with the assurance of lifetime product support. The turnover of the Company during the year 2002-2003 was Rs. 2527 crores. The Company expects to achieve a growth target of 20% during the year 2003-2004 and a minimum of 15% growth every year thereafter. It is expected to play a significant role in development of future electronic warfare equipment.

(c) The exports achieved during the year 2002-2003 were of the order of Rs. 48 crore while the target under the Memorandum of